

RHETORICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Rasa Valienė

Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania
rasjasv@yahoo.com

Dr. Ilona Čiužauskaitė

Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania
ilonaciuz@gmail.com

Abstract

The object of this article is to present the main features of classical rhetoric and to reveal transformations of it, applying Aristotele's theory of categories of persuasion as the main method of analysis and assesment of public speeches. Theory of virtues of eloquence, associated with *pathos*, an appeal to audience emotions, is an important technique for every public speaker in order to deliver correct, clear, well reasoned and expressive public speech. Although huge variety of theories of rhetoric have been developed and modified during centuries, the fundamental ones remain unchanged. This has not, however, reduced the significance of public speaking quite on the contrary public speaking has become a daily activity of everyone's life. Therefore, classical rhetorical canons defined by ethics, is an important approach to every modern public speaker. In conclusion, ethical and effective eloquence is the key to leadership, encouraging younger members of society be equally responsible in preservation of values and solution of global challenges.

Purpose – the purpose of this article was to present the main features of classical rhetoric and to reveal transformations thereof, focusing, in particular, on Aristotle's theory of categories of persuasion, an important technique of rhetoric applied in every leader's public discourse.

Design/methodology/approach – the paper is based on research, scientific literature analysis and comparative analysis of different types of public speeches from ancient times to the present day.

Findings – the final thesis of this article states that although the requirements for public speech have been modified throughout history, the ability to reach rhetorical

persuasion depends on the capacity to speak under the canons of classical rhetoric. Moreover, the most effective communication strategy is based on the synthesis of logos, ethos and pathos categories and their application in public discourse.

Practical implications – the paper reveals several practical implications important for leadership development in the contemporary world. Ethical and effective eloquence is the key to leadership, encouraging young members of contemporary society to be equally responsible for preserving common values and overcoming global issues. Modern day speakers’ public discourse demonstrates an obvious tendency of opposition in speaking and acting processes. This situation is conditioned by an obvious lack of synthesis of logos, ethos and pathos categories in daily rhetoric activities. Although it is common to speak eloquently and convincingly, spoken words do not always match the actions taken, particularly, in political discourse. Therefore, rhetoric values, such as *res non verba* taken from Antiquity, the cradle of European culture, ought to be included in education and development system of future leaders.

Research limitations/implications – the list of speakers selected for the scope of this research differ in terms of their intentions, purposes, types of speeches, i.e. some of them are informative, while others are emotional or appealing. The difference in structure and type of public speeches makes the analysis limited. Moreover, an additional factor of distinct variables has to be taken in consideration during the analysis of public discourse, namely, historical period, culture, age, religion, gender and occupation, and, last but not least, the circumstances of a public speech which can have a negative impact on the evaluation of work making the research superficial and incomplete.

Originality/Value – within a huge variety of rhetoric theories and conventions some of them have been modified over time, although the fundamental ones remain unchanged to this day. This has not, however, reduced the significance of public speaking quite on the contrary public speaking has become a daily activity of everyone’s life. Therefore, the Aristotle’s theory of rhetorical categories is an important approach to every modern speaker and the most effective strategy leading to rhetorical persuasion. Moreover, the dissemination of rhetoric science is promoted by a significant growth in importance and implications of communication throughout the world. Stylistics, structural poetics, text linguistics, logic, advertising theory, pedagogy, psychology and other sciences are also based on research of classical rhetoric’s traditions and transformations. By comparison, in the context of cultural integration eloquence and ability to communicate has become particularly important in social, political, educational or entrepreneurship activities.

Keywords: rhetoric, rhetorical transformations, public speeches, public discourse, Aristotle’s categories of logos, ethos and pathos, rhetorical persuasion, virtues of eloquence.

Research type: general review.